

King's Children.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE OPEN DOOR IN SIAM, OR "THE LAND OF THE WHITE ELEPHANT."

Siam or Syam, *the broron*, presents another peculiar opportunity for the entrance of the Gospel. We cannot but notice in this study, the absence of striking and startling events, such as characterized some of our past studies, and will some of our future. "In Siam the kingdom comes without observation;" neither do men say, "Lo here" or "Lo there," as tho to call attention to some amazing phenomenon."

The Siamese are said to be the most interesting people of the Orient; but very little has been known about them because very few books have been published about them; now, however, we are beginning to know some thing about them and their land.

(1) Area, about two-hundred-thousand square miles, or six times as large as New York.

(2) Population, owing to a native custom of numbering only the *males*, it is difficult to give the population correctly; it is estimated at about eight millions.

(3) Capital, Bangkok. The Venice of the Orient, containing half million people.

(4) Vegetation: abundant, luxuriant and marvellously beautiful.

(5) Fruits unsurpassed in variety and excellence.

(6) Animal kingdom no less varied and interesting, including the famous so called "White Elephant," as the form associated with the appearing of Buddha and the transmigration of souls far on their way toward the Buddhist heaven—*Nirvana*.

(7) Abundance of minerals and precious stones.

(8) Woman, tho by no means man's equal, her condition here is vastly superior to that of her sex generally in the East and her ordinary treatment is affectionate and considerate.

(9) Social distinctions are numerous and numerical, *five* representing the lowest slave and one hundred thousand the second king.

(10) The Sacred Literature, in the *Pali*, is written with a stylus on long slips of palm-leaf and the four-hundred principal works embrace four thousand volumes.

(11) The Secular Literature consists of about two-hundred and fifty principal works with two thousand volumes.

(12) Education: From eighty to nine-

ty per cent of the males can read, and education is afforded gratuitously in the temples.

(13) The people: Of them Dr. Pierson says: "They are gentle, amiable, respectful to parents, and to old age, kind to children, urbane and polite to strangers, above the average in cleanliness and intelligence and capable of high culture and refinement. They are untruthful and conceited, polygamy prevails among them, gambling houses abound, and men have been known to sell their own wives and children to pay debts incurred in this fascinating "vice of risk."

(14) Religion: Buddhism *absolutely* sways the people and is found here in its purest and most un mixed state.

They worship the "White Elephant" which ranks among the nobles, bears titles, wears gold bands on his tusks, served by kneeling attendants with trays of silver, is sprinkled with sacred water by the priests and attended by a physician.

Idols are to be found everywhere. Fourteen thousand in one temple; and in "Bangkok there are two hundred temples with ten thousand yellow-robed lazy priests supported by charity.

In the seventeenth century (about 1662) the Roman Catholic church carried its corrupted form of Christianity into Muang-ti. They lowered the Gospel to a level scarce above the level of heathenism, seeking to win converts to their faith by accommodating the Gospel to the prejudices and customs of the heathen.

(15) Protestant Missions.

It is to be especially noted, that in Siam as in India, the door to missions was opened and first entered by a *woman*, Mrs. Ann Hasseltine Judson, to whom is reserved the name of being the First Lady Missionary to the Foreign Field. Whilst living at Rangoon, Burmah, we are told that she became deeply interested in the Siamese residents in that city. She learned the Siamese language, and translated into it from the Burman, (a) a catechism prepared for the Burmans by Dr. Judson, (b) a tract containing an abstract of Christianity and the Gospel by Matthew. In 1819 the catechism came from the Mission press at Serampore, *the first book ever printed in Siamese*.

Ten years afterward (1828) came Dr. Gutzlaff, the German missionary with Rev. Tomlin, to Bangkok, treated thousands of patients who came for medical aid, distributed books and tracts, and were so impressed with the need of Siam and its open door that they made an appeal to the churches of *America* to send forth laborers into the field.

Dr. Gutzlaff with Mr. Tomlin's aid,

translated the New Testament into the Siamese tongue.

So the work was carried along. A half century ago all foreigners, missionaries or not, were expelled from the country; now all Christian countries are enjoying treaty-rights with the Siamese.

To-day, no land is perhaps more widely open to Christian Missions than Siam.

But notice the lethargy of the church. In all this country there are but two main mission stations, Bangkok and Petchaburi; and the entire missionary force consisting of six men, twelve women and nine native helpers, each of whom would have, if equally divided, three hundred thousand souls.

OPPORTUNITIES IN SIAM.

(1) Influence of her contact with Western Civilization.

(2) The telegraph and postal system.

(3) Mercantile enterprise is developing the exports and introducing imports.

(4) Changed attitude of the Siamese government to Christian Missions.

(5) The king next to the "Mikado of Japan" is the most progressing sovereign in Asia.

There is something of interest to the student of missions concerning the accession of this king.

The year 1851 was the crisis in the history of Siamese missions. The ruler at that time was opposed to Christian missions; and because of his subtle influence with the people, it was almost impossible for the missionaries, either to purchase or rent houses in which to live; and again, because of some complications between this ruler and British Government, the expulsion of the missionaries seemed almost inevitable.

Knowing human resistance to be in vain they (the Christian workers) went to God in prayer. Their prayers were answered; and here, as in Turkey, in 1839, the death of the king came just when the crisis had fully come. "The Sovereign in whose hand our very breath is, took away out of the path of missionary advance, an otherwise insuperable obstacle, in the person of a malignant monarch.

The question was now, "Who is to be his successor?" and again they besought God to interpose in their behalf; and it is to be *especially* noted that the choice fell upon that *one* man, who above all others God saw would remove all restrictions upon the legitimate work of the missionaries.

The man selected was the only man in the Empire that had *ever been trained by a Christian missionary*. Tho not himself a Christian, thro study with a Christian he had imbibed tolerant and catholic princi-